THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • THURSDAY • MARCH 19, 2026 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 22 • LATE CITY EDITION

The New Indian Express
Wishes its readers a

Our offices and press will remain closed today and there will be no issue of the paper on Friday

GOVT APPROVES ₹33,660-CR SCHEME TO DEVELOP 100 INDUSTRIAL PARKS

The Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA) to develop 100 plug-and-play industrial parks across the country

PLUG-AND-PLAY MODEL FOR FASTER GROWTH

Under the scheme, industrial parks ranging from 100 to 1,000 acres will be taken up for development with financial support of up to ₹1 crore per acre. BHAVYA's plug-and-play model with pre-approved land, ready infrastructure, and integrated services, will significantly reduce entry barriers for investors, the government said in a press release | P15

₹2,585 CR TO BOOST SMALL HYDRO PROJECTS

- Other decisions include a new ₹2,585 crore scheme to support the development of small hydro projects with capacities between 1 and 25 megawatts, by providing 30% of the project cost or ₹3.6 cr per MW
- The Cabinet also approved more than ₹1,718 crore to help the Cotton Corporation of India provide direct price support to cotton farmers

₹6,969 cr

TO BUILD 4-LANE ACCESS-CONTROLLED HIGHWAY IN UTTAR PRADESH

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

Ugadi is about fresh start!

CAR LOAN @7.45%p.a.*

Zero Processing Fee

Bank of Maharashtra

bankofmaharashtra.bank.in

Give a Missed Call: 8010 614 614

*T&C Apply

EVA NAMMAVA

Honour killing Bill tabled in state Assembly

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

THE Karnataka Freedom of Choice in Marriage and Prevention and Prohibition of Crimes in the Name of Honour and Tradition (*Eva Nammava, Eva Nammava*) Bill, 2026, was tabled in the Assembly on Wednesday.

The proposed legislation aims to curb caste-based discrimination and protect inter-caste couples, amid concerns over honour killings and social ostracism. The bill also stresses on minimum five years imprisonment if any killings in the name of 'honour' and, if any injury, three years' imprisonment with penalty extending to Rs three lakh penalty for grievous injury and for simple hurt, it is two years with Rs two lakh penalty. The offense is to be cognizable and non- bailable.

The bill seeks to ensure freedom of choice in marriage, prevent caste-based crimes, safeguard human rights, promote the dignity of inter-caste marriages and establish "Eva Nammava Vedike" to solemnise inter-caste marriages. This Vedike shall consist of retired judge, police, revenue officer along with sub-registrar. The government may, in consultation with the High Court, designate District Courts as special fast-track courts to try cases related to honour-based crimes and offences under this Act. P7

EXPRESS READ

17 killed as massive fires break out in Delhi, Indore

New Delhi: Devastating fires in Delhi and Indore on Wednesday killed 17 people, many of them children, and gutted several shops in busy markets in Ahmedabad and Chandigarh, triggering panic and large-scale firefighting operations. Nine members of a family, including three children, were killed after a massive fire tore through a multi-storey residential-cum-commercial building in southwest Delhi's Palam area. In Indore, eight members of a family were killed after a fire broke out at a local businessman's three-storey house following an explosion at an EV charging point outside the building. P12

Gulf oil sites on edge as Iran's gas field hit

Israeli strike prompts Tehran to warn UAE, Saudi, Qatar

AGENCIES
@Tehran/Tel Aviv/Dubai/ Washington

IN a major escalation in the ongoing war in West Asia, Israel on Wednesday bombed Iran's huge South Pars natural gas field, prompting an angry Tehran to threaten to retaliate by striking the energy assets in United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar "in the coming hours".

The strike on South Pars has the potential to set off a chain reaction that could stifle the entire Gulf region's economic lifeline amid disruption in oil production and movement.

A Qatari foreign ministry spokesperson termed the strike—carried out by Israel with the concurrence of the US—a "dangerous and irresponsible" escalation that put global energy security at risk.

Iran's Tasnim news agency, quoting Iranian officials, said Tehran would strike Saudi Arabia's Samref refinery and Jubail petrochemical complex, UAE's Al Hosn gasfield, and Qatar's Ras Laffan refinery and Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding Company.

South Pars, located off the coast of southern Iran's Bushehr province, is the world's largest natural gas deposit which Iran shares with Qatar.

Targeting Iran's energy infrastructure is seen as a major escalation as the US and Israel have till now held back on any move that could invite an Iranian retaliation against other producers in the region, which could set oil prices on fire.

On Wednesday, Brent prices hovered over $108 per barrel—up from $70 just weeks ago.

Israel on Wednesday said it also eliminated Iran's intelligence minister Esmail Khatib in overnight strikes. On Tuesday, Iran's national security chief Ali Larijani was killed in a targeted Israeli strike.

In a first, Israel publicly stated that all senior Iranian officials would be its military's targets from now on. "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and I have authorised the Israel Defense Forces to target any senior Iranian official for whom an intelligence and operational opportunity arises, without the need for additional approval," Israel's defence minister Israel Katz said.

Meanwhile, in a body blow to US President Donald Trump's justification for starting the war with Iran, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard said that Iran was not trying to rebuild its nuclear enrichment capacities that were destroyed in a June 2025 US-Israeli attack, under Operation Midnight Hammer.

"As a result of Operation Midnight Hammer, Iran's nuclear enrichment programme was obliterated. There have been no efforts since then to try to rebuild their enrichment capability," Gabbard said in a written testimony to the Senate intelligence committee. P14

Smoke rises from a building following an Israeli strike in central Beirut, Lebanon on Wednesday | AP

DAY'S DEVELOPMENTS

- Iran confirms assassination of top intelligence official Esmail Khatib in an Israeli strike
- India to prioritise domestic fuel demand amid requests from neighbours
- Indian vessel 'Jag Laadki' carrying over 80,000 MT crude oil reaches Gujarat's Mundra Port

No extra fee for 60% of seats on domestic routes for fliers

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

AMID complaints about airlines levying high additional charges for allocating seats on flights, the Union civil aviation ministry on Wednesday directed that a minimum of 60% of seats on all domestic flights be allocated free of charge.

In another passenger-friendly measure, the ministry asked airlines to ensure that passengers traveling on the same PNR (Passenger Name Record) are seated together.

"Passengers travelling on the same PNR are to be seated together, preferably in adjacent seats," the ministry said in a release.

The airlines were also directed to bring out clear, transparent policies for carrying pets on board. Besides, they must ensure that carriage of sports equipment and musical instruments on board are facilitated in a transparent and passenger-friendly manner without compromising on applicable safety and operational regulations.

Additionally, all airlines must strictly adhere to the passenger rights framework, particularly in cases of delays, cancellations, and denial of boarding. The rights of passengers must be prominently displayed across the airline's websites, mobile applications, booking platforms, and airport counters, the ministry said.

"60 per cent seats free of charge, assured seating together for families, and clear, transparent norms for carriage of sports equipment, musical instruments & pets," Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said in a post on X.

Belagavi man poisons 15-day-old daughter to death

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Belagavi

IN a shocking incident, a 15-day-old infant was allegedly poisoned to death by her father in Ukkad village of Belagavi district. The grieving mother accused her husband, Bhimaraya, of administering poison to their newborn daughter. The infant had been born just two weeks ago.

According to family members, Bhimaraya had come to visit the baby when the incident occurred. They alleged that he brought a small tube and used it to feed a poisonous substance to the child. Soon after, he fled the scene, raising strong suspicion.

Tension prevailed outside the Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS), where the family staged a protest with the infant's body, demanding justice and immediate action against the accused.

SBI
The banker to every Indian

POWER YOUR GROWTH WITH THE RIGHT BANKING SUPPORT

Presenting a range of premium SBI Current Account Variants

SBI Current Account Variants

Rhodium Exclusive account with solid features

Diamond To meet your growing business needs

Palladium Where your business enjoys elevated privileges

Gold To support expansion and diversification

Platinum Avail premier banking services

Silver Perfect for everyday banking

Scan QR to know more

T&C apply

Benefits
Substantial free cash deposit limit | Concessional CMP/POS/Sound Box facilities and more

For assistance, call 1800 1234 | 2100 or visit sbi.bank.in

Follow us on

GRASSROOTS SHEROES

Two K'taka women shine at Jal Mahotsava

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

TWO women from the state's rural areas – Anitha and Channamma – were honoured during the ongoing Jal Mahotsava 2026 for the smooth implementation of rural water governance under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM). President Droupadi Murmu, who felicitated them, appreciated them for their contributions. The Ministry of Jal Shakti is organising Jal Mahotsava 2026 from March 8 to March 22.

While Anitha of Muddatanuru was honoured for her efforts to ensure 24/7 water supply to Muddatanuru Gram Panchayat, Channamma received the award for ensuring that every house in Sarawad has tap water connections with round-the-clock supply.

Anitha and Channamma receive awards from President Droupadi Murmu

Anita who worked alongside the Gram Panchayat and the Village Water and Sanitation Committee in Ballari, said, "I went door to door to identify households that lacked water connections and encouraged them to apply for it. I also helped in the operation and maintenance of the water supply system, coordinating with water supply staff, monitoring daily distribution and reporting leakages or breakdowns for timely rectification."

Channamma, a resident of Sarawad GP in Vijayapura district, said, "As an Anganwadi worker, I reached out to families and created awareness about responsible water use and safe drinking water practices. I also encouraged every family to responsibly use and maintain their piped water connection."

I went door to door to identify households that lacked water connections and encouraged them to apply for it. I also helped in the operation and maintenance of the water supply system
Anitha of Muddatanuru